THESES OF THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS
OF HISTORICAL PLACE NAMES IN SZÉKELY LAND

Name geographical examinations
of Attila Szabó T.'s Transylvanian Historical Place Name Collection

JÁNOS BÁRTH

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Scope, methodology, sources

Examination of an area's onomasticon can be carried out in several ways, as toponyms – and proper names in general – can at once tell about the language, history and the social and cultural background of the denominator and name formation itself, thus attracting the attention of various disciplines. The basic characteristics of names though naturally entail the primacy of the linguistic approach: names are built up from linguistic elements and they exist as a more or less confinable subsystem of the lingual system. Different aspects might prevail in a name analyisis: linguistic forms, historical attributes, social background or geographical characteristics appear with more or less emphasis in such examinations. The size of the analysed source material, databank has significant influence on the research: in the Hungarian onomastic literature of the past few decades, we can mainly find papers analysing in detail the place names of a single settlement or one larger or smaller region, but only a few extensive onomastic synthesis works have been published that reasses and extend the results of former studies to all Hungarian toponyms. The growing number of name collections containing historical and synchronic records and the high number of data contributed to the broadening of research directions, but due to the fact that the monumental databanks of toponyms are enormously hard to handle, comprehensive works are still rare.

My doctoral dissertation is founded on ATTILA SZABÓ T.'s collection of historical place names in Transylvania, which was published in book form belatedly, only in the 2000's. Simoultaneously with the publication of the book series, the demand for using computer technology for handling the loads of data gathered in the collections became generally accepted. Therefore the development of a computerized toponym database and a multifunctional search

engine software enabling the effective query and representation of data started as early as the editing and publishing of the book version.

I had the opportunity take part in the publication of the manuscript collection, in the design of the computerized version and in the processing of data as well, thus my former publications and the present dissertation are based on this work. The area covered by the source data of this dissertation is that of the published volumes: making use of the aforementioned software I have sorted the name collection of the settlements in the historical *Udvarhely*, *Csík* and *Háromszék* comitats, thus attaining a database covering almost the entire territory of Székely land.

The characteristics of the source data and the possibilities opened up by the computer tools used entailed that the most powerful aspect of analysis be that of name geography. In the Hungarian and international literature of the last decades such examinations have served three primary purposes:

1. The research orientation drawing historiographic, demographic conclusions from the territoriality of names has great traditions. 2. A great part of onomatogeographical works uses the localizable geographical name collections for the examination of dialects and dialectal-linguistic history. 3. Some researchers undertook the examination of the systemic attributes of name formation and the intrinsic characteristics of names from a geographical point of view. These researches opened up the possibility of visual representation of the territoriality of name formation similar to that of dialect regions, i.e. the ‘dialects’ of toponyms. Present dissertation follows the traditions of all the three (historical, dialectal - historical linguistic and onomastic) orientations, as they cannot be entirely separated in the phonetic, lexical, structural-typological analysis of phenomena.

The onomastic and dialectal features of the area in question, Székely land, have always attracted the attention of historiographists, since they

provide a basis for chronological and ethnic conclusions regarding the early periods lacking written sources. Historical toponyms can be used for revealing the antecedents of the 20th century state of dialects. The computerized versions of the following works meant great help throughout the cross-checking of data: *Magyar nyelvjárások atlasza* (The Atlas of Hungarian Dialects), *A romániai magyar nyelvjárások atlasza* (The Atlas of Hungarian Dialects in Romania) and the *Székely nyelvföldrajzi szótár* (Székely Linguistic Geography Dictionary). The lexical, typological and structural charasteristics of names can tell about the general attributes as well as the internal division of place name formation practices of the region in question and can be paralleled with similar examinations of other parts of the Hungarian language area.

Structure of the dissertation

1. In the first chapter I review the relevant literature serving as the basis of my research. In the first place those drawing historiographic inferences, primarily regarding the history of settlements, from the geographical diffusion of names: papers which examine the historical typology of settlement names from a geographic point of view as well, particularly the works of LÓRÁND BENKŐ, who has drawn considerable conclusions concerning the immigration to Székely land by jointly examining the onomasticon and dialects of the territory. Secondly, papers in which place names served as sources for the history of language and dialects, both in phonetic and vocabulary research. Thirdly, I mention Hungarian and international researches focusing on the territoriality of the different attributes of names and also discussing theoretic questions of the geographic ties of onomastic phenomena. In the next chapter of the literature review I present the current trends and results to date of computational dialectology and onomastics, to which the database and its

operating software serving as the basis of this dissertation are closely related. Finally I review the research history of place names in Székely land.

2. In the second chapter of the dissertation, I present the source of the onomasticon used in the dissertation, ATTILA SZABÓ T.'s collection of historical place names in Transylvania, the method of processing the data from Székely land, the structure of the electronic databank of toponyms and the operation of the developed software.

The collection of place names of ATTILA SZABÓ T. hadn't been disclosed in printed version for quite a time, only a part of it had been incorporated into the *Erdélyi Magyar Szótörténeti Tár* (Historical Lexicon of Hungarian from Transylvania). The manuscript collection was published only between 2001 and 2010, in fifteen volumes, arranged according to the former Transylvanian comitats. The volumes' structure follow that of the fundamental works of ATTILA SZABÓ T. (*Kalotaszeg helynevei* (Place names of Kalotaszeg), *Borsavölgy helynevei* (Place names of Borsavölgy)). The some half million name entries are not equally divided among the volumes: the greatest number of place names were recorded from the territory of the comitats in Central Transylvania, while the least were collected from the boundary territories. For the most part, entries are microtoponyms from the 1719th centuries, but a significant number of settlement names can also be found. The entries sorted in volumes according to the comitats, then according to settlements and then in chronological order, served as a good basis for historical research, but for a linguistic or onomastic utilization, searchability, an index, and computational processing were necessary.

Development of the place name database: the design of the software and the computerization of the data have been carried out in the framework of an NKFP-project entitled *"A magyar nyelvváltozatok geolingvisztikai kutatása*" (Geolingistic research of Hungarian language variants) until 2007,

then from 2008 in the scope of an OTKA tender (title: *"Nyelvjárási és helynévtörténeti anyagok geolingvisztikai kutatása"* (Geolinguistic research of dialectological and onomastical corpora)) (both projects were headed by JENŐ KISS). The software facilitating the processing and search in the data was developed by DOMOKOS VÉKÁS and FRUZSINA SÁRA VARGHA, while the author of this dissertation contributed to the planning of the software and carried out the selection and annotation of name entries.

For the computerized processing of the book form of ATTILA SZABÓ T.'s historical place name collection, a computer surface was developed, most suitable for multicriteria search, grouping, and analysis, classification of the groups created based on their temporal and spatial position. As the first important part-task, a codification and a related font have been developed, containing each and every necessary basic letter and diacritical sign. The collection – or rather the material of a volume – was then broken up to datafiles in which every single place name entry retained its connection to the comitat, the settlement, the date (that of the source), the source and the page number of the printed version. Separating the body of names from the text has to be solved manually: data in the text are selected and classified (according to denotatum types) via individual decisions.

Making use of the software *Olló* (scissors / goatling in Székely dialect), we managed to select more than 45 000 primary periphrastic place denotatums, and 21 000 further names within these, from ATTILA SZABÓ T.'s place name collection from the territories of *Háromszék* comitat, *Csík-Gyergyó-Kászon* comitat and *Udvarhelyszék* comitat. The place name collection broken up to files annotated according to denotatum types creates a database, in which: we can search for different names, words, letter combinations; we can narrow the whole database or the search results according to given denotatum types, dates

or settlement codes; we can do several groupings of and save the results; we can display the results on maps.

By means of the different search options (sensitivity to alternate spellings, combination of search questions, prohibition of undesirable results, filters according to settlements/dates) data can be easily and efficiently looked up and displayed. Grouping the search results allows for onomastic analysis and classification. Nevertheless, the most useful function of the software is that the results and groupings can be displayed on interactive maps. Thus onomatogeographical representation becomes immanent part of each and every analysis of name types, word-groups and phenomena.

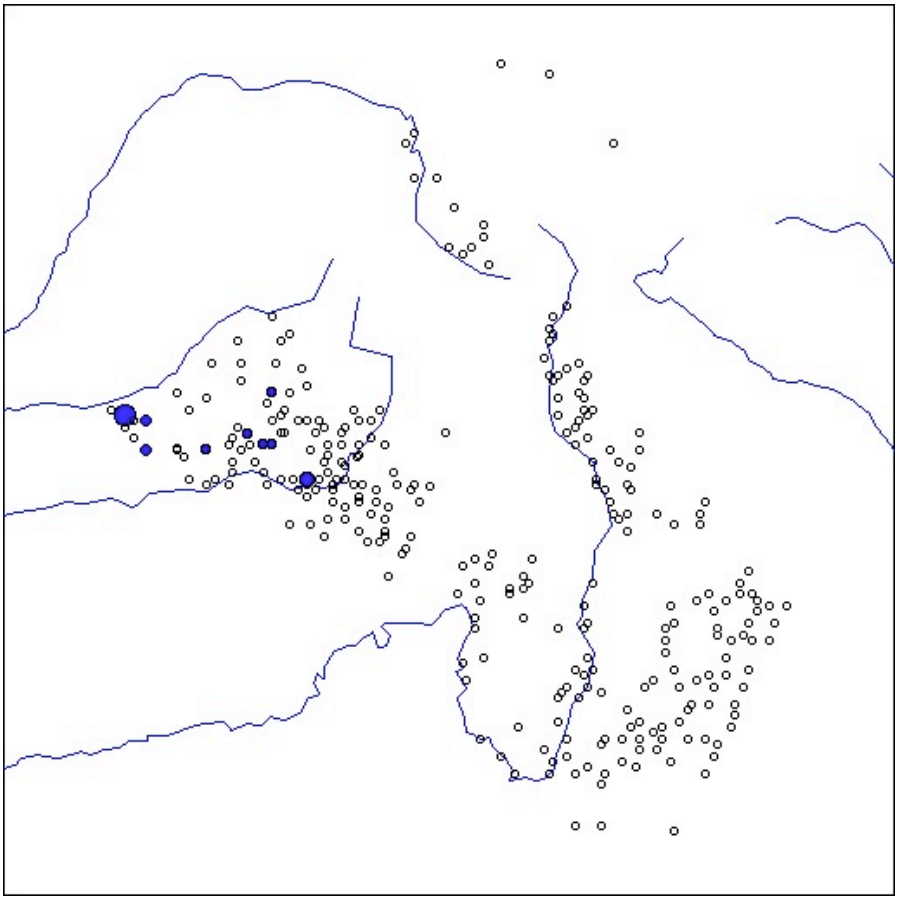
In the last part of this chapter I describe the number and distribution of data according to denotatum types, chronology, comitats and settlements.

3. The third chapter of the dissertation describes the possibilities of name geographic analyses of Székely land's place names by displaying the phonetic phenomena and the lexis and name structural types used in name formation on maps.

The examples describing phonetic phenomena also illustrate comparability with dialectal atlases. Only few data were found for the pronounciation of "ö" instead of "e" manifested in place names. *Orotás*, archaic form of *irtás* can in turn abundantly found in geographic names, proving that this form existed in dialects in higher number and greater territory than recorded in the atlases reflecting the 20th century state of the language. The variants *bikk* and *bükk* show similar geographical diffusion in place names and in dialects. By separating two historical periods though, diminution of the more archaic illabial variant becomes visible. The data of *lyuk ~ lik* manifest the fadeout of *ly* in historical place names. The different variants of *bodza* appearing in place names show similar diffusion as the dialect map and

reinforces the connections of Székely land's dialectal characteristics to the Transdabunian region.

In the introduction of the section dealing with lexicogeography, I cover the definition and classification questions and literature of the most important group of common geographical nouns. For the name geographic examination of the lexis of Székely land's place names, I have defined the following groups: 1. landform names denotating hollows 2. landform names denotating eminence 3. landform names with relative meanings (common geographical nouns describing parts of relief units) 4. general plant geographical apellatives 5. words relating to vegetation 6. words relating to fauna 7. common hydrographical nouns 8. words relating to clearings 9. tree names 10. words relating to agriculture 11. words relating to grazing. This grouping is most suitable for name geographical analysis: frequency and geographical diffusion of words with similar meanings can easily be examined this way. I give the most detailed analysis of landform names (groups 1-3.), which are of utmost importance in name formation. I present the diffusion of each lexeme on maps and provide details about their frequence and meanings. In order to illustrate the word geographical maps, here I present the occurences of *ropó* (meaning downward slope), which visibly appears only in the settlements of Udvarhelyszék comitat.



Through the next pages of the section dealing with lexicogeography, I summarize the onomatogeographical characteristics of name formation expressions, laying particular stress on historical references. I separately analyse the significance of a peculiar group, common geographical nouns derived from names of parts of the body. I present the broader application of lexicogeographical examinations and the aspects of ascertaining the meaning of common geographical nouns through a case study about the word *vápa* which appears in great extent in Székely land denotating hollows.

In the third section of the analytical part of the thesis, I describe the name geographical aspect of name structural, name typological examinations. In the first place, I present on map those settlement name groups that have outstanding significance in determining the date of settlement of the area: the groups of Slavic origin, plain anthroponymic settlement name, *-falva* as

posterior constituent and patrociny origin. Then I demonstrate the geographical picture of a peculiar alteration of settlement names, typical of the 17th century: the temporary addition of *–falva* posterior constituent to different settlement names. From among name structural types I examine names in possessive constructions with the help of river names containing the lexeme *patak*. Even though in this case neither the onomatogeographical, nor the historical examination can prove it with complete certainty, the data suggest that the possessive construction is a widespread, though slightly diminishing, way of name formation. Finally, I give a detailed analysis of names in so-called adverbial structures (e.g. *Vízremenő, Felmenő, Alájáró*) which occur in great number among historical data, and in case of which their being a name or an occasional periphrase is not easy to decide. I disclose the geographical distribution of lexemes appearing in these structures (*menő, jövő, szökő, kelő* etc.) in a table arranged in groups, so that the differences among the major territorial units can be revealed. Comparing the data under discussion and their parallels from synchronic place name collections, this name type seems to be highly over-represented in the written sources compared to spoken language usage.

Findings

The idea that computerization could mean the real solution for the animation of the vast collections of linguistic data constituted the starting point of my dissertation. Computational dialectology could reach considerable progress among others by the joint interpretation and impressive map representation of different geolinguistic atlases, while onomastics relying on computerized databases could describe the different charasteristics of names by investigating name databanks of hundreds of thousands or even millions of data. It also became evident throughout the publication and computerization works of ATTILA SZABÓ T.'s Transylvanian historical place name collection, that it is onomastic research that can benefit the most from the use of computer tools, hence this is the aspect that I laid the most stress on in the analysis of Székely land's place names.

In the thesis I described in detail the characteristics of ATTILA SZABÓ T.'s databank of toponyms, and the software *Olló* developed for the processing of data and for managing the database, in the hope that such a summary of experiences would mean useful help for the continuation of the work and for the launch of other similar ventures. Some special features of the collection came to light throughout its computerization that made it necessary to develop more complicated, specialized methods than usual in case of other databanks (e.g. synchronic place name collections). Such characteristics (variety of historical characters, appearance of periphrase forms, etc.) increase the heterogenity of the database produced, but at the same time this way they can serve as source material to several disciplines, that is why it's most important that the computerized version keep, preserve these characteristics. When describing the operation of the search engine, I presented those functions in

detail which might have significance in the examination of different onomastic research aspects, i.e. those by which all relevant data can most effectively be looked up, grouped, sorted and represented on map.

In the analytical part of the dissertation, the number of phonetic, lexical and structural-typological questions covered, together with the related maps, could have evidently been much higher as well. I strived to select those problems which are connected to questions already raised by previous geolinguistic, historical, dialectal or onomastic researches, and which represent the general attributes of Székely land's place names and their inner geographic division at as many levels as possible. At the same time I strived to describe the potentials and constraints of geolinguistic examinations at the different linguistic levels.

In historical questions, onomatogeographical examinations can provide mosaic tiles that can complement, adjust former results. The evidence of the linguistic connections with Southern-Hungary, Western-Transdanubia, Northern-Hungary, an issue closely related to the question of the Székelys' origin, has been preserved in place names including archaic forms, or rather, in some cases they are only preserved there. The geographic distribution of name types provided great support to the examination of the phases of the Székely immigration, but having them reassessed can contribute traditional onomastical conclusions not to become mechanically utilizable in historiography. On the maps of historical place names, scholars of dialect and linguistic history can scrutinize the spatial movement, diffusion and diminution of a few phonetic phenomena regularly appearing in names, and numerous name forming words (e.g. *bikk ~ bükk, mál*). On the other hand, such examinations are limited by the sociolinguistic characteristics of name entries and by the lexis used in names.

For onomatogeography focusing on names, the territoriality of any characteristic of names might be meaningful, but such research should not stop at the boundaries of a comitat or region. It should be expanded to the whole language area. The elements of the vocabulary used in place name formation many times show fixed territorial diffusion in smaller regions as well, as they are closely related to the elements of the dialectal vocabulary which is also influenced by the natural environment and historical processes. In contrast, the types and structural characteristics of names are arranged in deeply rooted, generally used groups, territorial boundaries of which can only be revealed through examinations of the whole Hungarian name system, using computer tools for the systematization of a vast number of data.

Related publications:

Former papers:

Szabó T. Attila erdélyi történeti helynévgyűjteményének tanulságai

[Lessons form Attila Szabó T.'s Transylvanian historical place name collection]

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Presentations:

Szabó T. Attila erdélyi történeti helynévgyűjteményének tanulságai

[Lessons form Attila Szabó T.'s Transylvanian historical place name collection]

Eötvös Konferencia (2003)

Székelyföldi településnév-vizsgálatok

[Examinations of settlement names in Székely land]

Helynévtörténeti Szeminárium (Síkfőkút, 2005)

Szabó T. Attila Erdélyi Helynévtörténeti Adattárának bemutatása és az új kötet ismertetése

[Presentation of Attila Szabó T.'s Transylvanian historical place name collection and review of the latest volume]

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Szabó T. Attila Erdélyi helynévtörténeti adattárának digitalizálása, mutató készítése

[Digitalization of Attila Szabó T.'s Transylvanian historical place name collection, construction of an index]

Helynévtörténeti Szeminárium (Síkfőkút, 2006)

Szabó T. Attila Erdélyi helynévtörténeti adattárának informatizálása

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Nyelvészeti doktoranduszok „Félúton" konferenciája (2006)

Háromszéki helynevek elemzése

[Analysis of place names in Háromszék]

VI. Nemzetközi Hungarológiai Kongresszus (Debrecen, 2006)

Vápa ~ lápa

Helynévtörténeti Szeminárium (Síkfőkút, 2007)

Székelyföldi történeti helynevek névföldrajzi vizsgálata

[Name geographical examination of historical place names in Székely land]

VI. Névtudományi Konferencia (Balatonszárszó, 2007)

Földrajzi köznevek székely helynevekben

[Common geographical names in Székelyland's place names]

Nyelvészeti doktoranduszok „Félúton" konferenciája (2008)

A Székelyföld betelepülésének néhány kérdése a történeti helynevek és a nyelvföldrajz tanulságai alapján

[Questions of the immigration of Székely land, based on the findings of historical place names and linguistic geography]

Fiatal középkorosok konferenciája (Budapest, 2008)

Helynevek vagy körülírások? Kérdések a székely határnevek kapcsán

[Place names or periphrases? Questions in connection with Székely microtoponyms]

Helynévtörténeti Szeminárium (Vasvár, 2009)

Az erdélyi történeti helynevek feldolgozásáról, a különböző adattárak egységes szempontú közzétételéről

[About the processing of Transylvanian historical place names and the uniform publication of databanks]

„Hangok – Helyek” műhelytalálkozó (Budapest, 2009)

Földrajzi köznevek a székelyföldi domborzati nevekben

[Common geographical nouns in relief names in Székely land]

Helynévtörténeti Szeminárium (Síkfőkút, 2010)